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Soviet Policies in the Middle East and Mediterranean Area

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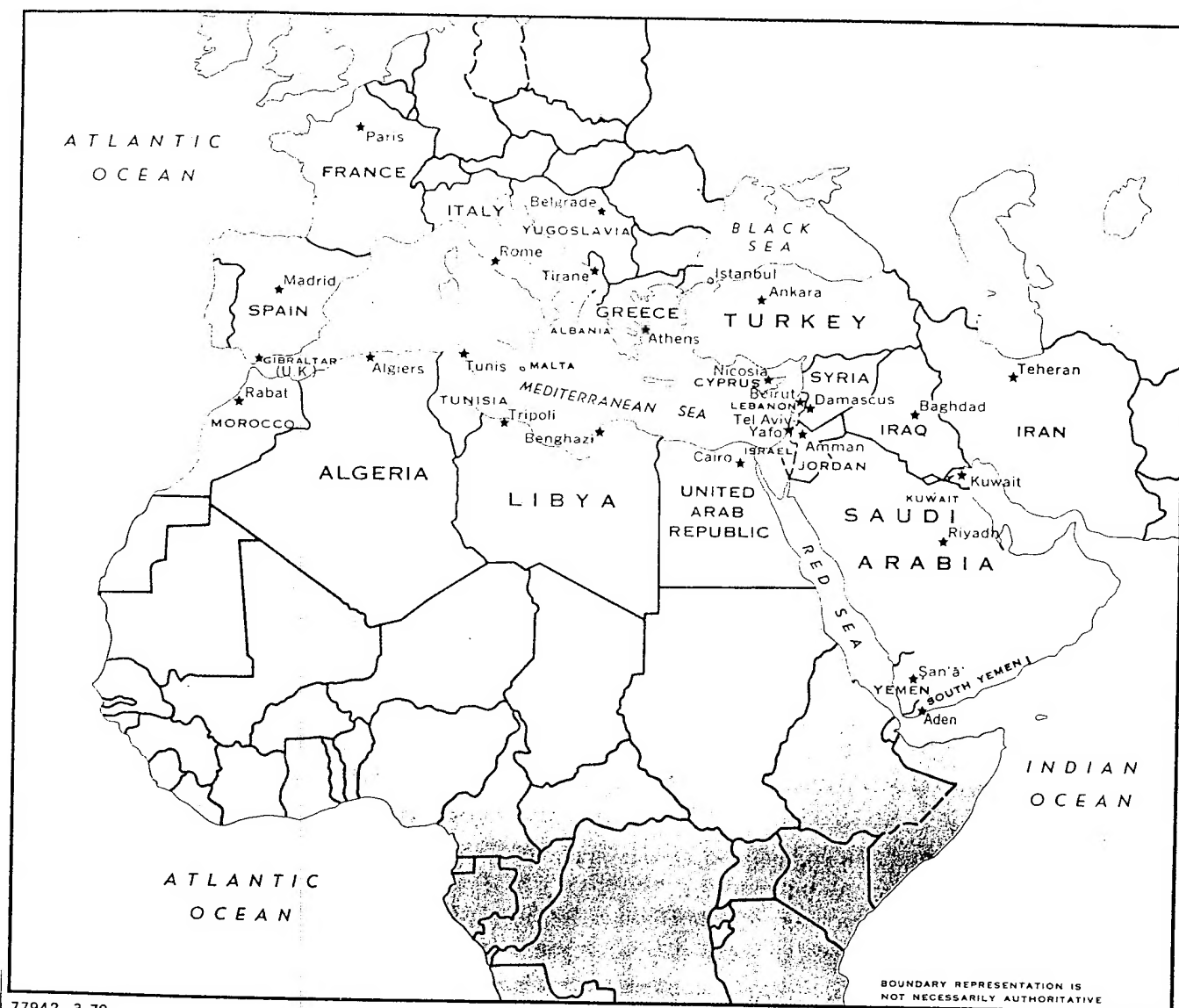
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SOVIET POLICIES IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND MEDITERRANEAN AREA

SUMMARY

A. Over the last 15 years, the USSR has established itself as a major power factor in the Mediterranean world. By exploiting postcolonial resentments and especially the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Soviets have sought to deny the area to Western interests and influence. Their calculation has been that the displacement of Western with Soviet influence would constitute a broad strategic reversal for the West and a considerable gain for themselves. Nevertheless, they have not seen the area as one which engaged their most vital national interests; these remain focused on their relations with the US in general, on Eastern and Central Europe, and on their conflict with Communist China.

B. The Arab-Israeli conflict provides the Soviets with their greatest means of leverage in the Middle East, but it also faces them with the most severe complications. They have extended enough military aid to the radical Arabs to become thoroughly involved in the latter's cause, but their efforts have not created an effective Arab defense. Israeli military attacks, particularly against Egypt, intensify this Soviet dilemma. They wish to provide Egypt with effective defense, but seek also to minimize the risks of direct involvement; yet if they sought to defuse the situation by pressing the Arabs to make concessions to Israel, they would jeopardize their influence in the Arab world. Barring a de-escalation of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Soviets will probably step up their aid to the Egyptians, and they may provide new weapons systems and additional personnel to improve Egyptian air defenses.

C. Despite the Soviet support for the Arab cause in the Arab-Israeli conflict, Moscow's relations with the radical Arab states are subject to occasionally serious strains; none of these countries is entirely re-

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sponsive to Soviet pressures, and each is jealous and suspicious of the others. The still more uncontrollable fedayeen movement is a problem for Moscow, chiefly because any direct Soviet support for it involves embarrassment in Moscow's relations with established governments; nevertheless, we think the Soviets will continue to develop relations with the fedayeen discreetly.

D. The Soviets have aspirations to establish themselves in the western Mediterranean as well, but Tunisia and Morocco remain generally wary of the USSR and retain strong ties with the West. Algeria has accepted Soviet assistance, but more recently it has been drawing nearer to its immediate neighbors and to France. Although the new regime in Libya has close ties with Egypt, it shows no signs of welcoming a Soviet presence, and Nasser is probably not anxious to encourage Soviet influence there. Among European states with interests in the area, Moscow must be concerned to avoid provoking alarm by its activities in the Mediterranean lest this compromise its policies in Western Europe; France, in particular, has ambitions to enlarge its role in the Mediterranean.

E. Since the June War in 1967, the Soviet military presence has grown in the area: roughly 5,000 Soviet military advisers are now stationed in several area countries; the Soviet naval squadron in the Mediterranean has been strengthened, and is supported by air and port facilities in Egypt. How the USSR might use its military strength in the Mediterranean area in times of crisis and war is examined in this paper in four major contingencies: (1) Arab-Israeli hostilities short of all-out war (paragraphs 41-48); (2) full-scale Arab-Israeli war (paragraphs 49-51); (3) other disputes in the area in which Soviet interests were involved (paragraphs 52-53); and (4) East-West hostilities involving both the US and the USSR (paragraphs 54-55).

F. The Soviet presence in the Mediterranean region is likely to prove durable. Radical nationalist forces will continue to work against Western interests and will continue to receive Soviet support. Thus the rivalry between the US and USSR in the area is likely to persist at least so long as it continues in the world at large.

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DISCUSSION

I. THE STRATEGIC SETTING: BROAD SOVIET CONSIDERATIONS AND OBJECTIVES

1. Soviet power first moved into the Mediterranean in the mid-1950s. Seizing on the opportunities for influence offered by Arab-Israeli antagonisms and by increasingly militant and anti-Western forms of Arab nationalism, and leap-frogging over the Middle Eastern members of the newly formed Baghdad Pact (Turkey, Iran, and Iraq), the USSR eased its way into both Cairo and Damascus with offers of arms, economic aid, and political support. During the 1960s, through the use of these and other conventional instruments of influence and power, the USSR became the primary backer of the radical Arab states. Today the Soviet Union is a major factor in the Middle East, with a number of client states in varying degrees of dependency and with elements of its own armed forces now present in the area. The Soviet leadership almost certainly sees its gains here as the most extensive and successful of all its efforts to expand Soviet influence in areas of the world once dominated by the West.

2. Clearly, the Soviets have in this period looked upon the Middle East as an area of strategic importance. A part of this attitude no doubt was inherited from their predecessors; Czarist planners traditionally viewed this part of the world as a special Russian sphere of interest and periodically sought to expand Russian power southwards. In modern times, especially since the death of Stalin, this geopolitical emphasis has been accompanied by an ideologically inspired hope that the anticolonialist attitudes of the Third World could be made to work for social change and for the emergence of local power elites sympathetic to communism. And this has been joined with the view that the Middle East has become one of the main arenas of the Soviet struggle with the West and the US. The Soviets may see the area as more complicated and the opportunities less immediate than they did in 1955 when they first undertook a military supply program for Egypt. But they evidently still hope to bring the states of the region into an anti-Western alignment and ultimately to establish their own hegemony there. Finally, the area is seen in Moscow as a strategic military zone: in hostile hands, it could pose a threat to the USSR and block Soviet access to the Mediterranean; in friendly hands, it protects the USSR's southwestern border and permits Moscow to move its influence into the Mediterranean world and beyond. The Middle East and much of the non-European Mediterranean world are thus, in the Soviet world view, proximate, important, and vulnerable.

3. This is not to say that the Soviets attach the same weight to their problems and objectives in the Middle East and Mediterranean basin as they do to their prime concerns elsewhere. Their stake there is less critical to their interests than their relations with the US in general, their concerns in Eastern and Central Europe, and their conflict with Communist China. It is in these areas and with these countries that the most vital of Soviet national interests are directly en-

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gaged. There are in addition certain self-imposed limitations on Soviet policies in the Mediterranean area and the Middle East. The preservation of the USSR's position in the Middle East would not be worth the serious risk of nuclear war with the US, whereas its presence in, say, East Germany, might be. But at least until recently Moscow has been able to base its approach in the Mediterranean area on calculations of opportunity and risk within the area concerned without serious conflicts with its objectives elsewhere.

4. Inevitably, as the degree of its involvement in the area has grown and the level of its commitment risen, the USSR has found itself faced with mounting costs and risks. It has exhibited some anxiety to control these risks and to curb the excessive enthusiasms of some of its clients. But it has also chosen to live with danger, and its position is now potentially vulnerable to the pressures and perils of events over which it may have little or no control—the actions of the Arab states, of Israel, and even of the US. Broadly speaking, Moscow has behaved as if it wishes the Middle East to remain an area of at least some tension. It apparently believes that the risks attending this are manageable, and that continued polarization in the area will make it increasingly difficult for the conservative Arab states to maintain their ties with the US, thus decreasing US influence throughout the area. But the Soviets clearly recognize that in the event of another explosion in the Middle East they would be faced with some very hard choices.

II. INSTRUMENTS OF SOVIET POWER IN THE AREA

5. In moving into the Mediterranean, the Soviets have used the conventional instruments of power available, short of the actual use of force, to exploit the opportunities open to them. They have used military and economic assistance as a means of penetration and as a way of promoting Arab dependence on the USSR; they have maneuvered politically to pressure and seduce and support; and they have introduced their own naval power into the area as a means of adding to their influence and diminishing that of their antagonists.

6. *Military Aid.* The first and still most important Soviet instrument of influence is military assistance.¹ Since the mid-1950s, the USSR has extended \$2.8 billion of such aid to four Arab states—Egypt, Iraq, Syria, and Algeria; this represents roughly half of all Soviet military aid to non-Communist countries. Egypt, with over \$1.4 billion in aid, is by far the largest beneficiary. Iraq and Syria have also become almost wholly dependent on the USSR for weapons, equipment, and spare parts. It was Moscow's prompt and extensive resupply operation in the wake of the June War which quickly restored the leverage it had momentarily lost in the Arab world.

7. *Economic Assistance.* The USSR has also engaged in substantial economic aid programs in the Middle East and the Mediterranean area.² Since 1957, the

¹ See Appendix, Table I.

² See Appendix, Table I.

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Soviets have committed at least \$2.6 billion of economic aid to Egypt, Iran, Turkey, Iraq, Algeria, and Syria (in that order)—about 40 percent of their total economic aid commitments to all non-Communist countries. These programs serve different policy aims in different countries. In the case of Egypt, for example, the aim is to assist the development of the leading Arab nation as a Soviet client, and to reinforce the overall pattern of dependency on the USSR; with Iran, there is a solid economic basis for expanded relations as well as the political purpose of helping to loosen Iranian ties with the West. Though in other areas of the world Moscow is becoming more selective and tough-minded, the policy of economic assistance in the Middle East and the Mediterranean area is likely to continue on a substantial scale for the foreseeable future.

8. *Other Economic Interests.* Economic interests play a role in Soviet policy, but not a decisive one. The Soviets want to maintain access to the waterways of the area; over half the Soviet merchant marine tonnage is based in Black Sea ports. Continued closure of the Suez Canal increases the cost of Soviet shipping east of Africa, but Moscow has learned to live with this situation, however unhappily. The USSR also has some interest in Middle Eastern oil and gas, both for itself and for the countries of Eastern Europe. Although Soviet supplies of petroleum appear adequate for domestic consumption and substantial exports for many years to come, East European and Soviet imports from the Middle East would release corresponding quantities of Soviet oil and gas for additional sales in hard currency markets. But Communist imports are likely to remain a small proportion of Middle East oil sales, and such imports would be further limited by the desire of the producing states to sell elsewhere for hard currencies.

9. *The Soviet Military Presence.* The Soviets have substantially increased their military presence in the eastern Mediterranean since the June War. The number of military advisers attached to Arab forces has been greatly increased and the Soviet naval squadron has been strengthened. The squadron's political objectives apparently are to show the flag, to demonstrate support of the USSR's allies in the area, and to reveal to the world that the Mediterranean Sea is no longer an exclusive preserve of the US Sixth Fleet. Its primary military roles are to monitor the Sixth Fleet, to complicate and inhibit its operations even in peace time, to develop capabilities against Polaris submarines and, in the event of hostilities, to attempt to deny Western naval forces the use of Mediterranean waters. Currently, the Soviet naval units also seem to have some effect in deterring Israeli attacks on Egyptian ports.

10. From the few surface ships and submarines deployed in 1964, the Soviet Mediterranean squadron has since grown to become the largest Soviet naval force outside home fleet operating areas. Except for occasional peaks, the Soviet squadron usually consists of about 12 surface combatants, 2 or 3 landing ships, and 8 to 10 diesel and nuclear-powered submarines. Normally, between 12 and 15 auxiliary ships provide logistic support and 1 to 3 are intelligence ships. Normally, 2 to 4 of the surface combatants are equipped with surface-to-air or surface-to-

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surface missiles, and 1 or 2 of the submarines are nuclear-powered. In addition, 6 Soviet naval reconnaissance aircraft (TU-16s), and 3 antisubmarine warfare (ASW) amphibian aircraft operate from Egyptian air bases in support of the squadron.

11. We estimate that the Soviets have roughly 5,000 military advisers stationed in the area—about 3,000 in Egypt, 1,200 in Algeria, 500 in Syria, a few hundred in Iraq, and lesser numbers in the Sudan, Yemen, and South Yemen. Although these advisers are not known to have command authority, in Egypt and Syria they occupy important advisory positions at or near command levels, and are present with units down to battalion/squadron level.

12. Since the June War the Soviets have concluded a number of "facilities arrangements" with Egypt which permit the Soviet naval squadron to make regular use of repair facilities in Alexandria and of storage facilities there and in Port Said. We have no evidence of any such approach to Syria. The Soviets would probably like to have similar facilities in the western Mediterranean. They apparently sought such arrangements with Algeria, but have been rebuffed. In fact, the Algerians have recently called for the withdrawal from the Mediterranean of the fleets of all non-riparian powers.

13. Soviet naval units, both surface and submarine, use the Egyptian facilities throughout the year; both surface vessels and submarines are at times supplied and repaired by Soviet tenders which remain on station in Alexandria. While not bases in the conventional sense—the Egyptians evidently retain formal control—these facilities do provide support services in much the same way. But in case of a major East-West crisis the availability of these facilities to the Soviets might be uncertain and would depend to an important degree on the circumstances of the crisis.

14. For purposes of refueling and resupply, the Soviet Mediterranean squadron relies primarily on 12 naval anchorages (mostly in international waters). It uses Egyptian shore facilities more on a basis of convenience than actual need, though these do enable it to extend the length of time its diesel submarines remain in the Mediterranean from two months to six. We believe that the Soviets would be reluctant to undercut their anti-imperialist propaganda by seeking to establish bases of their own in Arab lands. And even the radical Arab governments would want to avoid the stigma of such bases (though Egypt no doubt derives some comfort from the presence of Soviet naval vessels as deterrents to Israeli action).

III. POLICIES IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The Arab-Israeli Conflict

15. The evident damage done to Soviet standing in Arab eyes during the June War has since been repaired and the Soviet position strengthened. Moscow has established itself even more firmly as the champion of the radical Arabs, thus gaining an enlarged presence, a degree of Arab support for Soviet policies elsewhere,

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and a major voice in international negotiations concerning the area. The USSR has achieved this position at a price, not only in terms of the hardware involved in resupplying the Arabs but also in terms of the strains created by the increasingly critical Arab-Israeli conflict and the USSR's inability to produce either an acceptable solution or adequate protection for its clients. But these strains are not likely to undermine Soviet influence seriously so long as the Arabs have no alternative sources of great power support against Israel and continue to regard the US as committed to Israel's cause. In any case, the patron-client relationship involves a degree of Arab leverage over the Soviets as well as vice versa. For, in the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Soviets are more a prisoner of Arab emotions than the architect of Arab policies.

16. The Soviets have not, however, harnessed themselves to the more extreme aims of the Arabs toward Israel, and it is unlikely they will do so. Moscow continues to accept the legitimacy of Israel's statehood and Soviet diplomatic activity proceeds from the premise that a negotiated settlement should give Israel security. Yet the Russians recognize that in order to maintain their position with the Arabs they must maintain a generally hostile posture vis-a-vis Israel and broadcast their firm opposition to Israel's policies.

17. There has clearly been a large element of temporizing in the USSR's approach to international negotiations on the Arab-Israeli question. It has sought through talks with the US and others to influence US policy in the area and to demonstrate to the world at large that the Soviet interest is in peace. The Soviets place a high value on their brokerage function; they would be extremely displeased if, for example, Egypt sought to by-pass them in any serious negotiations on the future of the area. But it seems certain that the Soviets are not ready at this time to urge on their Arab clients the kind of concessions which might open up the possibility of a genuine settlement.

18. This does not rule out the possibility of Soviet support at some point for steps toward a modus vivendi to defuse the situation. In certain circumstances, the Soviets might actively seek an arrangement which would diminish the dangers of renewed hostilities while still allowing them to enjoy the fruits of continued Arab-Israeli tension. Even here, however, Moscow must be concerned not only with the terms of the arrangement but with the Arab reactions to them. In any case, Moscow is not likely to put very heavy pressure on the Arabs—such as a threat to suspend all arms aid—in order to bring about a modus vivendi.

19. The Soviets probably will be inclined to stay with a policy which will bend with events, hoping by it to avoid being drawn into conflict, while reinforcing their political and military presence in the area. It may be, however, that events—with an assist from the Israelis—will not permit the Soviets to maintain so comfortable and rewarding a course. Indeed, aggressive Israeli policies against Egypt point up a sharpening Soviet dilemma: whether to seek to preserve the Nasser regime by giving it a new level of support—thus increasing the risk of direct Soviet involvement—or alternatively, to press the Arabs to-

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ward a distasteful accommodation—thus risking a loss of influence in the Arab world.³

20. Soviet calculations have certainly taken into account that Israel has the capability to develop and produce, and might soon be in a position to deploy, nuclear weapons. The Soviets probably believe that such weapons would be chiefly useful to Israel as a deterrent against Arab invasion—something not likely to be attempted at any early date. Hence, while the USSR would take advantage of any Israeli nuclear weapons to mount a political campaign against Israel and to emphasize Arab dependence on the Soviets, it would probably not take seriously the possibility of their actual use unless Israel faced a desperate situation. Even in such circumstances, although Soviets have the capability to deploy nuclear weapons under their control on Egyptian territory, we think it highly unlikely that they would do so even under heavy Arab pressure. They would be more likely to threaten Israel from their own territory or from their ships in the Mediterranean.

The Arab States

21. The degree of Soviet influence over individual Arab states varies—and will continue to vary—considerably; it is probably highest in Egypt and nil in Saudi Arabia. Among the revolutionary states, Syria, Iraq, and South Yemen would be more susceptible to Soviet urging or advice than Algeria and Yemen. Kuwait, Lebanon, and Jordan are not anxious to cooperate with the Soviets but try to maintain good relations.

22. In Egypt, Moscow can influence the government's attitudes on a variety of external questions and can expect to play some role in the formulation of Egyptian economic and military policies. There is a great deal, however, that the Soviets almost certainly *cannot* do in Egypt. They cannot guarantee that Nasser will remain in power; his fate will depend on his health and on his own political skills. They cannot dictate the choice of his successor since they lack either a strong political organization within Egypt or a candidate for the succession whom they could cultivate without alienating Nasser himself. And, in the last analysis, they cannot control Cairo's behavior on questions the Egyptians consider vital.

23. If Soviet influence over Egypt has its limitations, these are even more marked elsewhere in the Arab world. Ideologically, the regime in Syria has a good deal in common with Moscow, and it is almost wholly dependent on the USSR for military equipment. Offsetting this, however, are several negative factors. Syrian nationalism is xenophobic. Of the Arab states bordering Israel, Syria is the most intransigent, rejecting all efforts toward a political settlement and encouraging a "war of national liberation." Moreover, Syria is dominated by a frequently changing coterie of military men; close Soviet relations with today's

³ Possible additional forms of military support that the Soviets might consider are discussed in paragraphs 41-51.

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leaders carry the risk of offending those of tomorrow. The latter consideration also applies to Iraq. In Jordan, the Soviets have had little success in expanding their influence since Hussein has so far chosen to deal with the Western powers which have long supported his regime and supplied his army. Soviet prospects would presumably improve if Jordan accepted Soviet arms or if the fedayeen came to dominate the regime.

24. Despite the USSR's extensive influence in some Arab capitals, the fortunes of individual governments in the Arab world are largely beyond Moscow's ability to control. The Soviets cannot guarantee a regime's survival, nor can they be assured of success should they seek to bring one down. The Soviets will thus probably stand aside in the event of important disruptions, moving in to attempt to capitalize on events as the dust settles. Though surely concerned about the uncertainties which would flow from Nasser's removal, and though they would seek to forestall such an eventuality, active Soviet intervention on behalf of Nasser would be unlikely. Revolutions in Saudi Arabia, Jordan, or Kuwait might be cheered by the Soviets, but could not now be inspired by them.

25. There are still further complications in Soviet dealings with the Arab world. The trade of most of the states of the area is still heavily oriented toward the West.⁴ Moreover, while the radical Arabs are united in their hostility to Israel, the governments of Egypt, Syria, and Iraq profoundly dislike and distrust one another. They are actively competitive in inter-Arab affairs, and Soviet policies concerning one may seriously complicate policies toward another.

26. The Soviets have for the most part limited their dealings and their material support to existing governments, but there have been exceptions. Thus, the USSR provided arms and diplomatic support to the FLN during the Algerian revolution; it has consistently championed a special status for the Kurds in Iraq; it has also tried (though modestly) to promote the fortunes of Communist parties in such countries as Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon.

27. With the fedayeen, the Soviets have dealt cautiously, mostly through intermediaries. This is partly because of the fedayeen's penchant for free-wheeling militancy, which Moscow cannot hope to control, and partly because of its reluctance to get involved in rivalries between them and governments of the area. Yet the Soviets now appear to believe that dealing with the fedayeen exclusively through the medium of Arab governments will no longer suffice in the face of an emerging sense of a Palestinian identity. Peking's vocal support of fedayeen extremism adds to Soviet inducements to keep lines out to these movements. Although a Fatah delegation has been in Moscow recently, the visit was unofficial, and arms to the fedayeen probably will continue to be channeled through area governments. Soviet support for the fedayeen will continue to be discreet, in an effort to avoid antagonizing Arab governments.

⁴ See Appendix, Table II.

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Non-Arab States

28. Concerning Israel itself, Moscow does not have full mastery over its own policies. It is obliged by its relations with the radical Arabs, in fact, to maintain a hostile attitude. This is made easier by the USSR's unremitting opposition to "Zionism," which the Soviet leaders see as an internal security problem in the USSR and Eastern Europe. As noted, Soviet policy does not seek the destruction of Israel. Not only would this remove the Soviets' principal leverage on the Arabs; Moscow also recognizes that Western military and political support makes Israel a factor with which the Soviets must contend.

29. The USSR enjoys no special relationship with Greece, Turkey,⁵ or Iran and, in fact, suffers from the legacy of the period when it posed an active threat to all three. Soviet ambitions in these states are curbed by the membership of all three in US-supported alliance systems and, in general, by the anti-Communist convictions of all three governments. Nonetheless, Soviet relations with these states have improved as a consequence of a major Soviet effort—begun almost a decade ago—to recast its image into that of a peace-loving and benevolent neighbor. Economic aid to both Turkey and Iran, sales of military equipment to Iran, and promises of a profitable trade with Greece are intended to add substance to the new image.

30. Economically, at least, Iran has gone the furthest in response; it has contracted for at least \$115 million worth of Soviet arms, and a Soviet sponsored 650 mile pipeline—now nearing completion—will bring over \$60 million worth of natural gas annually from the Persian Gulf to the Soviet Caucasus. Turkey has accepted some Soviet economic aid and seeks to avoid antagonism in the relationship, but the climate between the two countries is certainly not warm. Greece under the junta is vigorously anti-Communist, and trade will probably remain the most significant contact with the USSR. Moscow probably expects at least Turkey and Iran to draw farther away from the US and hopes to benefit from such movement. But the chances for a significant increase in Soviet influence in these three countries will be limited for some time to come.

IV. POLICIES IN THE WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN

North Africa

31. Though the western Mediterranean is not without its attractions and its opportunities for the makers of Soviet policy, the USSR's presence is far less conspicuous and its prospects are much less promising than in the Middle East. Two circumstances shape the politics of the area in ways not wholly congenial to Soviet interests. First, Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia have had long associations with France which have shaped their cultures, their economic associations, and their political outlooks. Second, though there is wide popular support for the Palestinian cause within the west Arab states, their government leaders are

⁵ See NIE 29.2-70, "Turkey Over The Next Five Years," dated 3 February 1970, SECRET.

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less willing than the eastern Arabs to accept Nasser's leadership, less dependent on Soviet support, and more suspicious of the policies and motives of both Nasser and the USSR.

32. Recent developments in North Africa pose further obstacles to the growth of Soviet influence there. Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco are patching up old quarrels which for a time contributed to Algeria's desire for Soviet support. These states are, in addition, moving somewhat closer to France as a result of French efforts to improve relations. Moreover, in the wake of the Libyan coup, concern over the westward extension of Nasser's influence has grown in all three countries. Their tendency to draw together may in time produce a sense of community divergent from that of the eastern Arab nations.⁶

33. Algeria is more revolutionary, more anticolonialist, and more anti-US than Morocco and Tunisia. It is thus easier for the Algerians to find a common cause with both the Egyptians and the Soviets. The Algerians have received substantial amounts of Soviet arms and military training assistance as well as Soviet support in a variety of economic development projects. But they have not allowed the Soviets to influence their domestic affairs, to interfere with their relationship with France, to reorient the great bulk of their trade away from Western Europe, or to guide the course of Algerian foreign policy in general. There has also been recent evidence of frictions in Soviet-Algerian relations. Algeria has views on some international issues which coincide with those of the USSR; yet it is not a client state, nor is it likely to become one.

34. Libya's military junta is unsure of its internal position and uncertain about both domestic and foreign policies. The junta, or at least its head, Colonel Qaddafi, has sought and received support—1,500 troops and several hundred technicians and advisers, as well as public backing—from Nasser. The latter no doubt welcomes the chance to extend his own direct influence into Libya, and he would be disinclined to see this eroded by the USSR's playing a major role there. The Libyan regime, perhaps at Cairo's urging, has several times rebuffed Soviet diplomatic overtures and Soviet offers of arms; it apparently prefers to buy from France and other Western suppliers. At least as long as the present junta stays in power, we think it unlikely that the Soviets will gain significant influence in Libya.

35. This is not to say that Libya lacks attraction for the Soviets. The USSR's Egyptian-marked reconnaissance aircraft flying from Egypt can cover the Mediterranean as far west as Sardinia. The use of Wheelus airfield in Libya would extend the range of TU-16 reconnaissance aircraft beyond Gibraltar. Moscow might thus seek to pressure Nasser into exerting his influence on the Libyan junta to provide these facilities for Soviet use. Nasser would be reluctant to do so, but he is deeply beholden to the Soviets, and it is possible that he might agree to some such arrangement—and the Libyans reluctantly acquiesce in it—if Soviet pressures were severe. Even in these circumstances, Soviet use of

⁶ NIE 60-70, "The Outlook for North Africa," is scheduled for publication in March 1970.

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Libyan facilities would probably be limited and covert. Only a very small Soviet presence would be required, especially if Soviet activities were confined to refueling.

36. Malta is also attractive to Soviet planners inasmuch as its location is strategic and its economy faltering. If Malta is unable to strengthen its economy through assistance from the West, it may turn to the Soviets for aid. Overtures have been made by the Soviets, but thus far Soviet fleet visits have been denied and Soviet offers to provide economic assistance have been declined. Elections must be held by March 1971; a change in government could pave the way for closer association with the Soviets. Although the Soviets may seek limited facilities in Algeria, Libya, and Malta through which to stage their reconnaissance aircraft, none of these countries is likely to extend such facilities at this time.

European States

37. In Western Europe, Soviet policy aims currently at promoting an atmosphere of detente and ultimately at reducing the US presence on the continent. Moscow will not wish to jeopardize these objectives by initiatives in the Mediterranean which would alarm the countries of Western Europe. It probably calculates that moves which seemed to threaten to cut off Western Europe from the Arab countries and their oil would stiffen the Western posture toward the Soviets—both in the Mediterranean and in Europe itself—and help consolidate ties between Western Europe and the US.

38. In fact, there are now signs of some change in European attitudes—a gradual increase in concern over the growing Soviet presence in the Mediterranean. No general alarms have yet been sounded, nor does there appear to have been any significant political pressure for changes in overall policies toward the USSR. But concern is increasing in West European military circles and this has been reflected in specific countermeasures under NATO auspices, such as the establishment of NATO machinery to monitor the activities of the Soviet naval squadron in the Mediterranean.

39. France, which has strong interests in certain Arab states, has been the most active of the West European states in the Mediterranean. In recent months Pompidou has sought to enhance France's position as a Mediterranean power by improving relations and influence with countries on both shores of the Mediterranean from Gibraltar to Greece. The Soviets have sought to take advantage of this policy, specifically of French support of the Arabs in their contest with Israel. But while Moscow has tried to use France to divide the Western powers—as in the Four Power talks on a Middle Eastern settlement—the Soviets must also be concerned that the French are their rivals. The sale of French arms to Libya, for example, may have deprived the USSR of an opportunity to sell its own weapons to that country and prevented it from extending its influence over the Libyan junta. Similarly, France's efforts in North Africa will help to counter Soviet influence in Algeria and to block it in Morocco and Tunisia.

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V. SOVIET CAPABILITIES AND INTENTIONS IN CERTAIN CONTINGENCIES

40. The enlarged Soviet military presence in the Mediterranean area has substantially increased Soviet influence and required all interested states, including the US, to take account of Soviet attitudes and possible actions. How and in what circumstances the Soviets might make *actual* use of their military power is considerably less clear. The paragraphs which follow examine possible Soviet actions and capabilities in four major contingencies: (a) Arab-Israeli hostilities short of a full-scale conflict, i.e., the present situation; (b) all-out Arab-Israeli war; (c) other area disputes in which Soviet interests were involved; and (d) East-West hostilities.

Arab-Israeli Hostilities Short of All-Out War

41. The current success of Israeli military activities against the Arab states has no doubt added to Soviet disillusionment with the Arabs' ability to use modern equipment effectively. At the same time, Israeli activities increase Arab pressures on the Soviets for more advanced types of equipment. The Soviets have turned down a number of Arab requests in the past and have to date carefully limited both the quantity and quality of arms shipments, partly because of the Arabs' limited ability to absorb such materiel. They are in the awkward position of having provided enough to be thoroughly involved, but of not having supplied support of a kind or nature to do a successful job of defending Egypt. Appeals from Cairo for additional help have become more urgent as Israeli raids have intensified.

42. Moscow is clearly aware that greater direct involvement entails heightened risks. It must be concerned that substantially greater assistance to the Arabs would not satisfy them but only stimulate demands for even greater Soviet support in the future. Not only would large-scale effort be very costly to the Soviets, but it would involve such an enlarged Soviet presence as to change the character of the Soviet-Egyptian relationship in ways that would raise problems for both parties. Yet these hazards have to be weighed against alternatives which may seem to the Soviets to be at least equally unpalatable. Certainly Moscow does not like to see Cairo helpless in the face of Israeli air assaults. Certainly it does not wish this sort of circumstance to weaken Nasser's position and jeopardize domestic stability in the UAR. And certainly it would be fearful that a refusal to aid the UAR in its hour of need would threaten to disrupt relations with Egypt and damage Soviet prestige throughout the Arab world.

43. We believe that the Soviets will decide, if they have not already done so, that some sort of favorable response to Egyptian requests is necessary unless Israeli attacks near Cairo are soon stopped. A decision by the US to provide additional modern aircraft to Israel would make such a Soviet response even more likely. But it will not suffice to increase the flow of air defense equipment the Egyptians already have, as the Soviets have recently done. The principal Egyptian problem is the lack of certain more advanced weapons systems and above all of qualified personnel to operate an integrated air defense system

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effectively. Hence any significant improvement in Egyptian defenses, at least in the short run, would almost certainly require Soviet personnel to man the network.

44. Additional Soviet support for Egypt's air defense could be at various levels. An integrated defense designed to protect the Cairo area might involve providing advanced interceptors, several battalions of advanced SA missiles, and additional antiaircraft artillery (AAA). Major elements of such a system would have to be directed, operated, and maintained by Soviet personnel, including pilots, for a considerable period, perhaps indefinitely. The Soviets might hope that this system would deter attacks on Cairo or subject the Israeli Air Force to unacceptable losses. While this system would leave other prime areas open to attack, the Soviets might calculate that it would suffice to serve Nasser's political needs.

45. If the Soviets felt that they had to provide protection for the bulk of Egypt's population, industry, and military installations, they would have to turn to more sophisticated equipment and establish air defense coverage of the lower Nile valley and the Suez Canal area. Such a system would require expanded early warning ground control intercept (EW/GCI) radars, many more advanced interceptors, greater numbers of improved SA missiles and additional AAA for key point defenses. To make the system operational within a few months would require the introduction of entire Soviet units involving many thousands of men.

46. The foregoing discussion of possible Soviet levels of support for Egyptian air defense is only illustrative; a number of variations are conceivable. The Soviets would of course strongly prefer to keep their support at the lowest possible levels of risk and cost. In deciding what levels of support would prove sufficient to their objectives, their risk/advantage calculus would have to weigh possible Israeli responses as well as Nasser's requirements. In view of the stake the Soviets have in Nasser's survival, and in the preservation of their relations with the radical Arabs, the Soviets may feel obliged to enlarge their risks.

47. To deter Israeli raids the Soviets might consider deploying in Egypt missiles with HE warheads capable of striking Israel proper. The Soviets, however, would have to weigh the chances that such a deployment would simply provoke the Israelis into larger attacks, perhaps on these missile installations themselves. Moreover, the threat of indiscriminate missile attacks on Israeli cities, let alone the actual delivery of such attacks, would involve the Soviets in an undertaking repugnant to much of world opinion, and one they would necessarily estimate would greatly increase the chances of direct US involvement. For these reasons, we think it highly unlikely that the Soviets would deploy such weapons. Similarly, we think it virtually inconceivable that they would consider deploying CW weapons there.

48. It might be that, coincident with moves for some form of greater support in Egypt's defense, the USSR would put pressure on the Egyptians to agree to military or diplomatic steps to defuse the present tension. Once Egypt's defenses

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seemed more formidable, the Soviets might feel more free to encourage a cease-fire, whether formal or tacit. They will probably continue to be unresponsive to US appeals for a formal agreement to limit arms shipments to the Middle East, but if the crisis continues to intensify, they might tacitly consent to curb additional arms shipments to Egypt if the US makes no additional aircraft sales to Israel.

Full-Scale Arab-Israeli War

49. Full-scale Arab-Israeli war could not be simply a replay of the 1967 war, if only because the Israelis now occupy extensive Arab territories. Whatever the course of the military action, the Soviets would surely not want to show themselves to be as helpless as they were in 1967. The presence of numbers of Soviet advisers with Egyptian and Syrian troops and of naval units in the area would make for a degree of involvement in any case. Whether the Soviets would consider intervening in a larger and more overt way would presumably depend on the course and duration of the war, and above all on their estimate of the US response.

50. Present Soviet capabilities to intervene in such a war with quick and decisive effect are significant but not appreciably greater than they were in June 1967. Although Egypt has made facilities available to the Soviet squadron and to naval reconnaissance aircraft, there are no Soviet ground or tactical air units ashore in the Mediterranean area. The Soviets could bring in such forces from the USSR, but they would have difficulty in making them operationally effective in a short-lived war. The USSR could also provide some covert military support—pilots in Egyptian-marked planes flying against Israel or, more likely, in defense of Arab cities; ground support crews; and perhaps some naval personnel.

51. But given the probability of Israeli victory in fairly short order, the odds would be high that the Soviets would fear involving themselves militarily in a losing cause, with all the political damage within and outside the area that this would entail. Since the Soviets would have an effect only if they intervened quickly, and on a scale which they would estimate would risk involving the US, we doubt that they would embark on such an adventure.

Intervention in Other Area Disputes

52. The instability of certain client states of the USSR and various disputes between Arab states could produce situations which threatened the USSR's friends or interests. In such circumstances, the Soviets might be tempted to use military force—as they have done in a limited way in the Yemen civil war. Such possibilities could arise in the course of the chronic factional struggles in Syria or Iraq, or if there were a request for direct Soviet military help from Nasser in a domestic crisis. In a situation involving struggle between rival Arab groups, Moscow might think it could pre-empt a Western move by moving in troops itself. At present the Soviets have a limited capability for rapid interven-

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tion. There may be as many as 500 naval infantry troops with the Mediterranean squadron—sufficient for a token landing. A substantial force could be moved in relatively quickly from the USSR, but this would entail overflight problems with Iran, Turkey, or Yugoslavia.

53. The Soviets would almost certainly be reluctant to commit their own armed forces in the Middle East for such purposes. For one thing, coups in the Middle East usually occur too quickly for intervention by outside powers to be decisive. More basically, the Soviets have no wish to find themselves embroiled in Arab domestic strife, particularly if there is a risk of finding themselves on the losing side. And they are likely to avoid any actions—such as moving troops into Syria—which might bring about all-out Arab-Israeli warfare or threaten to involve the US. In general, the rule that the Soviets prefer to avoid risks in unpredictable and uncontrolled situations would apply in such cases.

East-West Hostilities

54. In nuclear war, the Soviets' primary concern in the Mediterranean would be to limit damage from Western strategic forces, particularly ballistic missile submarines. At this time, Soviet ASW capabilities against the latter are extremely poor, despite the deployment of more modern ASW surface ships, including the helicopter ship, Moskva. Newer classes of Soviet ships, including nuclear-powered attack submarines, may soon be deployed to the Mediterranean. By 1975 Soviet capabilities to detect Polaris-type submarines may be somewhat improved, especially in restricted areas such as the Mediterranean. But the Soviets would still be unable to impair gravely the value of Polaris as a strategic weapon in the Mediterranean.⁷

55. At present, Soviet military capabilities for non-nuclear war with Western powers in the Mediterranean are limited by the lack of tactical air support and an inadequate and vulnerable logistics system. A significant effort to ameliorate these shortcomings would be extremely expensive and would draw down from more pressing general purpose force needs elsewhere. Efforts to acquire military bases for use in such conflicts would be a difficult and politically risky course. In the event of a major crisis in this area, the Soviets would be able to augment their Mediterranean naval squadron. If conflict were to break out, they would seek to attack Western naval forces, particularly aircraft carriers. In addition, the Soviet threat to Western naval forces and lines of communication would be enhanced by the difficulties of detecting Soviet submarines, and by the USSR's capability of bringing more submarines into the Mediterranean from the Atlantic.

VI. LONG TERM PROSPECTS

56. Some aspects of the Soviet position in the Mediterranean area are of course susceptible to direct Soviet control. The strength of the USSR's naval

⁷ For a fuller discussion of the ASW problem, see paragraphs 144 through 149 of NIE 11-14-69, "Soviet and East European General Purpose Forces," dated 4 December 1969, ALL SOURCE.

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squadron, the size of its military and economic assistance programs, and the degree of its political support for radical Arab objectives all are dependent on decisions made in Moscow. But many of the basic circumstances which shape Soviet policy in the area are determined in the main by decisions made elsewhere—in Tel Aviv, in Cairo, in Washington. In the totality, then, the USSR is only one of several principal actors in the area and it is always possible that—as during the June War of 1967—it will find itself playing a part not entirely of its own devising.

57. It is true nonetheless that Moscow's assumption of a leading role in the area is a significant and probably durable accomplishment. It does not now appear that the USSR will again be content to play a minor role in the Middle East and the Mediterranean. Even in the event of another Arab-Israeli war and another defeat for major Soviet clients, the Soviets would almost certainly retain some sort of position in the area—though it would probably for a time be reduced—and would continue to have a voice in the shaping of postwar configurations. With or without such a war, the political climate of the region is likely to remain generally turbulent. Radical nationalist forces will continue to work against Western interests in the area and in their endeavors will no doubt continue to find Soviet support.

58. It seems entirely plausible that Soviet estimates of the USSR's prospects in the Mediterranean basin do not depart substantially from the general picture sketched above. In any case the Soviets must be optimistic about their ability to remain among the major movers of the area. Still, over a decade of close involvement with their mercurial clients has probably persuaded them to be fairly cautious in their assessments. Certainly they can have few illusions about the military capabilities of the Arab states. And just as certainly they cannot believe that the problems of the more immediate future will always resolve themselves to the benefit of Soviet interests. By the same token, however, occasional setbacks and miscalculations will probably not seriously discourage them or deflect them from their course. In any case, the rivalry between the US and the USSR in the Mediterranean is likely to persist at least so long as the contest between them continues in the world at large.

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APPENDIX



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TABLE I
SOVIET MILITARY AND ECONOMIC AID TO AREA
NATIONS, 1954-1969,* MILLION US DOLLARS

RECIPIENT	MILITARY AID ^b		ECONOMIC AID	
	Total	Since June 1967	Extended	Drawn
Algeria	241	56	233	42
Cyprus	18	0	0	...
Greece	0	...	84	8
Iran	65	65	524	118
Iraq	500	127	309	130
Morocco	13	1	44	1
South Yemen	6	6	13	0
Sudan	20	20	65	16
Syria	423	118	234	114
Tunisia	0	...	34	17
Turkey	0	...	371	22
UAR	1,405	360	947	625
Yemen	75	16	98	62

* Evidence on economic aid is more complete than on military aid. The figures for the latter are in effect estimates based on partial data.

^b Figures are for amounts drawn.

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TABLE II
TOTAL EXPORTS AND IMPORTS OF AREA NATIONS WITH COMMUNIST
(USSR AND EAST EUROPE) AND INDUSTRIAL FREE WORLD
COUNTRIES, 1966-1968, MILLION US DOLLARS

(Trade with Communist Countries as Percent of Combined Total
Ranked in Decreasing Importance)

COUNTRIES	USSR AND EAST EUROPE ^a	INDUSTRIAL FREE WORLD ^b	PERCENT
Yemen	33	22	60
UAR	1,908	1,470	56
Syria	363	533	41
Sudan	152	738	17
Turkey	528	2,720	16
Greece	550	3,704	13
Jordan	40	276	13
Tunisia	122	854	12
Lebanon	160	1,199	12
Morocco	243	2,068	11
Iraq	242	2,662	8
Iran	491	6,226	7
Algeria	216	4,190	5
Malta	15	331	4
South Yemen	18	399	4
Israel	114	3,350	3
Libya	95	4,956	2
Kuwait	82	4,908	2
Saudi Arabia	16	5,484	Negligible
TOTAL	5,388	46,090	

^a Data for the USSR are virtually all from official Soviet trade yearbooks; data for Eastern Europe are all from trade statistics of the less developed countries.

^b Data are largely from the trade statistics of the less developed countries; where not available, data are estimates, as reported in the *Direction of International Trade*, based on trade statistics of the industrial countries and adjusted for the differences in reporting sources. The "industrial countries" include the European Economic Community, Austria, Canada, Denmark, Japan, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the US.

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